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Dr. WILLIAMS's
FAST SERMON
Preach'd before the
House of COMMONS,
On Wednesday the 14th of December, 1695.

P A N I J O R R E L.
Chap. Down. Com.

Jovis 12. Die Decemb. 1695.

ORdered, That the Thanks of this
House be given to *Dr. Williams*
for the Sermon by him Preach'd before
this House Yesterday at *St. Margarets*
Westminster, and that he be desired to
Print the same. And that *Sir Robert*
Cotton do acquaint him therewith.

PAUL JODREL.
Cler. Dom. Com.

3-5

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the

H O N O U R A B L E

House of Commons,

O N

Wednesday the 11th of December, 1695.

B E I N G A

Solemn Day of Fasting and Humiliation,

Appointed by His M^AJESTY,

For imploring the Blessing of Almighty God upon
the Consultations of this Present Parliament.

By JOHN WILLIAMS, D.D. Chaplain in Ordinary
to His M^AJESTY.

L O N D O N :

Printed for **W. Chiswell**, and **Tho. Cockerill**, Sen^r and Jun^r;
at the *Rose and Crown* in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*; and at the
Three Legs in the *Poultry*. MDCXC V.

2 E R M O N

Presented before the

U O N O B E R A D L E

anonimo 3 fo 110r

No.

Wednesday the 14th of December, 1892.

DEING

Colonel Day of Falmouth and his wife

1711

the Constitution of this Present Parliament.

BY JOHN WILLIAMS, D.D. Chaplain in Ordinary
to His Majesty.

:Y O C W O L

[illegible]

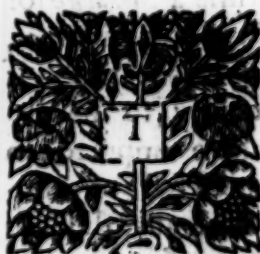
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

House of Commons, &c.

I S A M. II. 30.

*“Them that honour me, I will honour;
and they that despise me, shall be lightly
esteemed.”*



THE Words of the Text are a general Proposition, but made use of as a reason to justify the Severity of the Threatning here denounced by a Prophet against the House and Family of Eli; whose Sons at that time executed the Priests Office under him at Shiloh: Of whom, and their case, it is requisite to give some account,

as an Exemplification of the Text, and what may serve also as a Comment on it.

Eli, that was then High Priest, was a Descendant of *Ithamar* the Younger Son of *Aaron*; but how the Succession came to be alter'd, which from *Aaron's* death had probably continued for Seven Generations in the Line of *Eleazar* the Elder Brother, the Scripture is silent.

V. Ezra.
7: 3.

Chap. 4.
18.

There is nothing to be collected from thence to *Eli's* disadvantage and disparagement, in the double charge he Officiated in, whether as a Judge, in which Station he was for Forty Years together, or as the High Priest.

There is not a Syllable that charges him with Intrusion any more into the Priesthood, than into the Judicature.

1 Chron.
6. 7.

There was in being at that time a *Meraioth* or an *Amariath*, one of the Family of *Eleazar*, and the next in Blood and pretence too, if a direct Succession were inviolably to be observed, and yet it is no where imputed to *Eli* that he invaded or was possess'd of another's Right; nor is it said that any did abhor the offering of the Lord for that reason, as they did for another.

Chap. 2.
v. 17.

No! There we find *Elkanah* and *Hannah* (and without doubt those pious Persons were not alone)

alone) repairing to the Tabernacle at the appointed Seasons, and applying themselves to him as God's Minister, and the Director of the Publick Service.

1 Sam. i.
15, 26.

To him, and his Sons, were they wont to bring their Offerings, as it is expressly said there, v. 3. *When Elkanah went up out of his city yearly to worship, and to sacrifice unto the Lord of Hosts in Shiloh; the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, the priests of the Lord, were there.*

Whence this Translition of the Priesthood, from the Elder to the Younger House, proceeded; or when it was, whether before, or whether it began in *Eli* (as it is most probable) is not certain. It seems, whenever it was, to have been by God's approbation, if not his immediate direction; and that, perhaps, for some gross neglect, or great Miscarriages, or some incapacity on the other side: Or from the necessity of having such a Person in that Station in those perilous and uncertain Times, as would by a wise and steady Hand, and his prudent Conduct, and above all, by his Exemplary Piety and Vertue, maintain the Honour and Dignity of the Priesthood, and keep the People firm to their Religion, under all the inclinations, and too often prevailing inclinations to Idolatry.

This

This seems to have been the state of Affairs at that time, and the reason of *Eli's* introduction into the Priesthood.

And because of the difficult Service he was to enter upon, God encouraged him (as he was wont to do in great undertakings) by a particular promise of establishing his Posterity in that Sacred Function; as the words immediately preceding the Text do intimate; *I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father should walk before me for ever.*

Eli, as to his own person, and whilst in a condition, seems to have answer'd this Character, and to have acquitted himself worthy of the choice made of him, in both capacities, as a Priest, and a Judge; for during the whole time of his Administration, the Times seem to have been quiet, and the Nation in an orderly condition for about forty years together; and accordingly it is pass'd over in silence in the Sacred Annals.

Chap. 4.
15.

But *Eli* grew superannuated, being 98 years old, and blind, and incapable of officiating in person at the Altar; and so it fell to his Sons, two dissolute Young Men, that being from under their Father's Eye, and possess'd of so large a power, as from him devolved upon themselves,

set

for no bounds to their arbitrary and licentious Humours, but broke through all the ties of Piety and Modesty, treating the Institutions of their Religion with so prophane an Insolence, that men abhor'd the offering of the Lord; and so lewd were they in their Conversation, that by their Example and Encouragement, they made (as their Father tells them) the Lord's people to transgress.

Chap. 2.
17.

V. 24.

This was a Case too hard and perverse to cure by gentle means and calm reasoning, the way used by their over-indulgent Father, *verse 19, 24.* therefore it was time for God to appear to threaten and to punish: 'Tis time then for him to reverse his own Laws; to cancel his Promises, and recal his Favours which were so ungratefully and impiously abused; so it is represented in this verse, Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I find indeed, that thy house, and the house of thy fathers, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me: For them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed.

I. I shall Treat of these Words by themselves as a general Proposition, and as con-

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raising several important Truths, and that are worthy of our most serious Consideration.

2. I shall Treat of them with respect to the Context, and make use of them by way of Application to the occasion.

Before I proceed to which, give me leave to observe, That though it is in the power of every man, more or less, as well as it is his Duty, to honour God by his Words and Actions, by the Obedience he gives to his Laws, and the Acknowledgments he makes of his Providence, by the regard he pays to the Sacred Offices and Institutions of Religion; yet that this more especially belongs to those that are in a more eminent Station, and have greater advantages and opportunities for doing Good, than others; by their Authority, Power, and Example. Of these it's said, that if they then *Honour God*, and lay out themselves, and use their utmost Endeavours for promoting his Religion in the World, he will then *Honour* them, that is, will shew himself to be their God, by supporting them under all the discouragements they meet with, by directing them to the most proper methods, and giving success to all their endeavours; by raising them a just esteem, and making even their Enemies to be at peace with them; and by a

thousand other ways, that good and worthy Persons have the comfortable experience of in the faithful discharge of their Duty toward God and Men. To these the words (as they are before us) do more especially belong, *Them that honour me, I will honour.* Of which I shall treat first of all, as a Proposition in general, and by it self.

I. I shall treat of the Words by themselves, *Them that honour me, I will honour.*

The Honour due to Almighty God, is founded upon the same reason as his Being; and by the same Arguments and ways that we know him to be, by the same is he concluded to be of Infinite Power and Wisdom, and indued with all those Perfections which make him to be God, are peculiar to him, and do distinguish him from all other Beings besides; and for that reason we can no more be wanting in the Honour due to such a Being, than we can suppose him not to be, or not endued with those glorious Perfections that unalienably belong to his Nature.

And therefore if we did not understand the depravation of human Nature, nor had any experience of the state and inclinations of Mankind, we might well suppose that we should find the whole World a Temple, and all Mankind in

Fast, agreeing in a constant Adoration and Honour of God, as they do in the Belief of Him.

For who can consider the wonderful Power and Wisdom shining through the Works of the visible Creation, without the profoundest Reverence for their Great and Almighty Creator?

Who can Contemplate his Goodness and his Mercy, his Mercy to the worst, and his Beneficence to all; his readiness to Give what we Want, and to Pardon when we have Offended; but must express his sense of it by an humble Love to his Gracious Benefactor, and a hearty desire of being Conformable to him in the like Divine Temper?

Who can consider God's Government of the World, and his constant Preservation of Mankind, and an Order amongst them under all Vicissitudes and Changes, which like an Earthquake tear up, as it were, the foundations of Kingdoms; but must own his and the World's Preserver by his Prayers to him, and a Dependence upon him?

Who that considers the Equity and Perfection of the Divine Law, how suitable to the Nature, Reason, and Condition of Mankind, but must testify his regard to it by a ready and cheerful Obedience?

Who

Who can reflect upon the Preservation of a Church (the Conservator of Divine Truth) under all the opposition it has met with from the fury of Bad men, and the malice and craft of evil Spirits, that with one consent have been Confederates against it; but must acknowledge the watchful Providence that presides over it, and which has made even the Blood of its Martyrs, and the Sufferings of its Confessors, to be the Seed of the Church?

Lastly, Who is there that has made any observation of himself, and look'd into the Circumstances of his Life in the various Scenes of it, of Youth and Manhood, of Prosperity and Adversity, of Health and Sickness, of Success and Disappointments, of the Mistakes and Miscarriages when he has trusted to his own Wisdom and Conduct, and the wonderful turn of Affairs to his advantage, when he often least thought and expected; but must own a Cause superiour to himself, and his obligations to this Almighty Power?

These are Considerations lie open to every man's eye; and, in reason, we might as soon find so many Infidels and Atheists in the World, as any Contemners of the Most High.

Surely there is no need of any other Arguments than the nature of the thing to induce us

to honour our Creator, Preserver and Benefactor; and so the Text may seem to be in vain, when 'tis said by way of Argument, *Them that honour me, I will honour.* What need is there of this Doctrine? What need of any Rewards proposed and promised, any more to provoke, encourage and oblige us to honour God, than to love our selves? Since the same reason that will direct us to the one, will also direct us to the other.

Surely then there cannot be an instance given of so hateful a Creature as the other part of the Text supposes, of one that *despises* God; no more than of one that denies him: And if such an one there were, it may reasonably be supposed the whole World would with one mouth condemn him, and cast him out of their Communion.

Verf. 12. But it was not in that Age alone that there were such *Hophni's* and *Phineas's*, such *Sons of Belial*, that *knew not the Lord*; and such among the People that *abhorred the Offering*, and that *despised the Divine Institutions*.

It has been too much the Vice of most Ages; and I wish I could say, that this in which we live, were among those that are to be excepted: For then, whatever need there were of this Doctrine
in

in a degenerate Age and Nation, there would be no need of it in ours.

But though, blessed be God, we are not arriv'd to that prodigious state of Impiety, and that the Offerings to Almighty God, and the publick Offices of our Religion, are not so prophaned, as among the *Israelites* at that time; but are maintained, generally speaking, by the Guardians of the Law, and the Governors of the Church, as well as by the Laws and Established Order: Yet we may find too much of that Impiety insinuating it self among us; and work enough for all concerned in the government of Church and State to provide against. And therefore that the Argument of the Text is fit to be insisted upon.

But I shall refer the treating of it in this way to the Second General.

In the mean time, as the words lie before us, we may collect from them,

1. That Religion and the Civil Interest are closely connected: The honouring of God, and God's honouring those that thus honour him.

2. That Religion is in the first place to be taken into consideration: First honour God, and then God will honour.

3. According as Religion is encouraged, and
God

God thereby honoured, may we judge concerning the state of Persons or Nations.

1. Religion and the Civil Interest are closely connected.

It was strictly so among the *Jews*, whose Government was a Theocracy, the Constitution of God's sole Contrivance, and his immediate Establishment; so that they could not admit of any alteration, or revocation, but by the same Divine Authority.

And the Law of the Land being then of God's own Institution, there was a peculiar Providence and Blessing that was connected to their Obedience by a Divine Promise: And by this they were eminently distinguished from other Nations.

But though it was thus with them after an especial manner, yet the whole World always was, and ever will be under the government of God's Providence; and the same general Reasons are there for it over the face of the Earth. It being in this case, as it is in Government amongst Men, which however it varies, whether a Monarchy, Aristocracy or Democracy, has the same foundation, and the same Ends to pursue; which are the determining and securing mens Rights, the impartial administration of Justice, and

and the preservation of the Publick Peace and Order.

And howsoever the Providence of God may vary in its motions, now turning it self this way, and then another; yet there are immoveable Reasons upon which it always proceeds, and that is Religion, and the Blessing of God; our honouring of him, and his honouring of us, in conjunction and co-operation.

For Religion will stand to the World's end, whatever become of particular Persons and Governments: As the Earth will abide for ever, though the Inhabitants of one Age give way to another; though Rivers change their course, and Mountains their station. And 'tis Religion that gives the surest establishment, and infuses a new life into a Nation, or a Cause, when it seems to be upon point of expiring; for that engages Providence on its side; and then they have in reality what the Heathens had in imagination only, when they fought, as they conceived, against poor Mortals, with the advantage of having their gods concerned in their quarrel.

While Mortals engage with Mortals only, there is the like Force to defend, as to assault; and the success depends upon the greater Num-

bers, the inbred Courage of the Soldiery, the Conduct of the Commander, or some fortunate Accident: And the last sometimes has the advantage of all the rest; and is instead of Numbers, Conduct, or Courage; so that as *Solomon* observes, *The battel is no more to the strong, than the race is always to the swift*, Eccles. 9. 11.

But now when the Divine Providence comes to be concerned, it is not what the Number, or the Courage, or the Conduct, nay or Accidents, are on the adverse side: Because that's all in it self, and becomes all whereever it is.

And there it will be, where the Honour of God and Religion is concerned. This was it that inspired *David* with an undaunted Resolution; *Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, whom thou hast defied*, 1 Sam. 17. 45.

And these are no more to be separated, than the Soul and the Body; for if we once with *Goliath* defy, or to speak in milder terms, neglect or despise Religion, and have no regard to the Honour of God in our Consultations and Resolutions, our Affairs and Proceedings, we are upon the brink of destruction; and if we are preserv'd, and become successful, it is not for our own sakes, but for the sake of others, or some further

further design the Providence of God has in reserve for us.

There is a vast difference between what is done by Divine Providence for our own sakes, and what for the sake of others, or for other Reasons than what appear, and what are unknown at present to us. If for our own sakes, as it is, when grounded upon Religion, and the Honour we pay to Almighty God, it will then continue, and last as long as the Reason lasts upon which it stands. But if it be for other Reasons that we succeed in a Design, and not for our own sakes; then when the Reasons cease, our assistance that we had from the Divine Providence ceases with it. Thus it was with the haughty *Assyrian*, who prosper'd in his Invasion of *Judea*, not as he himself thought, by the wisdom of his own Counsel, and the mere force of his Arms; but as he was *the rod of God's Anger*, and sent by his special Commission against that hypocritical Nation. But that Service ended, there was a stop put to his Victory, and he soon fell under the like Calamity; As it follows, *When the Lord hath performed his whole work on Mount Zion, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks, Isa. 10. 5, &c.*

In which Case Prosperity and Success may be so far from being a Blessing, that it becomes a Curse; and often Men are thereby made but Instruments of mischief to each other, and the *Assyrian* is conquer'd by the *Babylonian*, the *Babylonian* by the *Persian*, the *Persian* by the *Grecian*; and the *Grecian* after a little time dies, as it were, upon the spot; and the Power, which when intire, was considerable, broke and crumbled into numerous Kingdoms, and came to nothing.

And thus it has been throughout the World from the time of the mighty hunter *Nimrod*, to the present Age; when it has been a mere humane World, subsisting, as it were, by it self, and managed by the Policy, and too often by the Passions and Vices of Mankind; by their Ambition and their Pride, their Revenge and Cruelty, the great Incentives and *Boutefeus* of the World. And thus there will be a circulation of rising and falling, of punishing and being punished; and like *Billows* of the Ocean, of swallowing up, and being swallowed up, till the World's end; whilst in this condition, whilst acted and managed by the Interests of Men, without respect had to a higher Cause, and Principle, viz. Religion, and the Providence of God. But now if we consider the World as a compound State, when
there

there is as certain connexion between Religion and the State, as between the Soul and the Body; then there is another account to be given of things, and a better State to be expected. The World is then as the *Jewish State* was, a kind of Theocracy, God is the Governor, and Religion, as it were, the Soul of it: And then it is that God becomes their Patron, and his Providence their security.

Indeed without the Providence of God, we are neither secure of what we have, nor can be sure of success in what we pretend to. It is there only that we are safe, by that only we can hope to succeed. And therefore as there cannot be a more comfortless prospect in view, than to take a cause in hand, where we cannot promise to our selves that assistance; so there cannot be a greater or more dangerous error committed in the conduct of Affairs, than to leave that out of our consideration, and to separate those two Interests of Religion and Civil Affairs, which God hath so advantageously, as to the Good of Mankind, joyned together.

2. As these Two are thus to be connected, so Religion is to have the preference: *Them that honour me, I will honour.*

Second Causes have this advantage of the first, that they are visible, and so sooner affect us than the Supreme, who is invisible; and therefore Mankind have been inclined to direct their expectations and endeavours another way. And as the Heathens, for want of looking further, made the most conspicuous, and sometimes the meanest Creatures, because present, the Objects of their Adoration; so when second Causes stare us in the face, and we see how one moves another, and from what immediate reasons the success of affairs doth arise; we are apt to begin with them, there to stay our hand and lodge our thoughts, and depend upon their concurrence and influence as if they all moved of and from themselves, and there were no Superior Power, no Invisible Agent, that they had a relation to, and dependance upon. Thus it was with them, *Isa. 22. 8. &c.* They looked to the armour of the house of the forest, made up the breaches, gathered together the waters of the lower pool, made a ditch for the old pool; but, saith God, ye have not looked to the maker thereof.

But this is an unpardonable oversight, to begin thus at the wrong end; as if because an Artificer uses a Pencil and Colours in the various Figures which he draws, and sets off by his Skill

to the greatest advantage; that a Person should impure all to the Instruments the Artist uses and applaud their Skill, and apply himself to them as the Operator, and pass by the Painter, upon whose Judgment they wholly depend in their Use and Operation.

Much so do they that apply themselves to the next Causes, and to the Means (how proper and sufficient soever they are in their own nature to answer the design) to the neglect of Him who is the Supreme Cause, and that gives Laws and Activity to all Inferior Agents, and directs, and over-rules, and determines them as he pleases. An imprudence that no Person would be guilty of in any case besides. It is not to be denied but all these inferior Powers, these second Causes, these Instruments and Means, may be and are very proper, convenient, and necessary in their place and order; but to begin with them without asking leave, and begging the Blessing of God in the use of them; is of Inferior to make them Supreme, of Instruments and Means, to make them the Efficient; and what therefore they may with the like Devotion, as the *Romans* applied themselves to Fortune, make the Objects of their Prayer.

Prayer is somewhere due, for we receive what we

we cannot of our selves procure; we live as well as we begin to be, by the like Power; and if we enter upon our affairs under the influence only of our own wisdom and power, we may as well pray to our selves, as depend upon our selves; since where our dependance is, there are our devotions due. But how ridiculous would he appear, that should thus adore himself, and pray to himself? A folly greater than that of *Caligula*, who when he required others to own him for a god, could not in the mean time think himself to be so. And yet this is a folly he must be guilty of that doth not in the first place own a God and a Providence, in the guidance and conduct of human Affairs; and darkly pursues them under the covert of a blind Chance, or of a Wisdom of his own, very often as blind as that.

We are taught a wiser course, and what will always hold and continue to be so, *Prov. 3. 5, 6. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* Or as it is here, *Them that honour me, I will honour.*

3. According to the honour we give to God, and the regard shewn to Religion, we may expect

pect to be honoured by him ; such we may expect the Event will be.

It is an easy thing to conceive that such the Event will be, forasmuch as God Governs the World ; and when we lay things in their proper order, there is no reason to think but that prosperity, honour, and success, should attend those that honour God ; as heat and light do the Sun. And we may as well question, whether it will be day when the Sun rises ; and whether it will be Summer with us when the Sun is in Cancer ; as whether God, who is infinitely Good, and has the Sovereign disposal of all things, will not so Govern and Order, as shall be for the Interest, Good, and Happiness, of such as honour him.

And yet if we draw near, and view the case as it is often in Fact, we shall find it far different from what it is in Speculation.

If indeed this were constantly so, that those that honour God were always honoured by him with such peculiar marks of favour, as distinguished them from others, it would serve as a character by which the Good might be known from the Bad. But since nothing is more evident from common experience, than that all things, generally speaking, come alike to all ; then those that do not honour God, may

fare alike with such as do ; and those that do honour him, fare no better than those that do not ; and so the force of the Argument in the Text will be lost.

But setting aside, for the present, what may be said in defence of the method of Divine Providence in such a seeming promiscuous dispensation of things (as the *Wise-man* speaks of) and the reconcileableness of the proposition in the Text to it, as to particular persons ; we are to remember what has been already said, that it is more especially to be applied to such Persons that are of eminent Character in respect of Quality, or Office ; or for the advantages they have and improve to the honour of God, and promoting of Religion. Such as these God doth honour in the eye of the World, and by Providences as extraordinary as their stations and improvements, doth often, and for the most part, crown with success, or a Blessing greater than that. So that even their disappointments shall be to their advantage, their danger to their security, and their fall, if not to their after-advancement (as was the case of *Job* and *Joseph*) shall be, however, to their reputation and honour.

Such as these that do good for goodness sake, and that lay out themselves for the honour of
God,

God, the service of Religion, and therein for the publick Good, are Benefactors to Mankind; and had they lived among the Heathen, who had no better, they should have been taken into the Kalendar of their Gods: And surely such as these will God more especially regard.

But if we raise the argument higher, and apply it to Nations and Communities, it improves in our hands, and we have a noble Instance of this Truth. It must be granted, that God that has a regard to the Flowers of the Field, the Fowls of the Air, and the Beasts of the Earth, is as much more concerned in the Good, Preservation, and Happiness of Mankind, as these in their Nature exceed the other; but yet because we see not into all the Events and Circumstances relating to men in this World, and that there is a reserve for them in another; we cannot so settle what relates to them, but that we are forced to suspend, and must acknowledge there are great difficulties, and that must remain so to be, till the whole comes to be disclosed. But now as to Men combined together in Societies, the case is not so perplexed; for there we may, generally speaking, observe, and perhaps, if a careful History of Acts and Events were preserved, it would appear, that God doth honour

those Nations which honour him; and that there is no People among whom, as well by their Practice as Laws, Virtue and Religion have been, and are encouraged, but has a suitable Blessing attending it, and the Divine Providence eminently appearing in their behalf. Even among the Heathens this was both acknowledged and experimented. And if we will but take the pains to consider the periodical Revolutions among the *Jews*, we should find all along through the course of that History, that it is a continued Series and Narrative of the Divine Providence, proceeding by this Rule: So that I am confident there cannot be one Instance given to the contrary, that ever they were delivered up to their Enemies, or had any great Misfortune befall them, but what was brought upon them from some foregoing Apostacy, and high Provocation.

And if there be any thing wanting for the proof of this part (of God's honouring them that honour him (as surely there is not) yet there are Instances upon Instances on the other part, that *those that despise Religion, shall be lightly esteemed.*

There are some Vices that in their own nature and apparent consequences root up Families, make Nations effeminate, and poor-spirited, and render them an easy Prey to the bold Invader;

der: As was evident in the declining Times of the Roman Empire, declining in Vertue as well as Power, and declining in Power, because they declined in Vertue.

But there are other Sins that have as bearing an influence in the Judgments that befall a Nation, and especially a Nation in Covenant with God, as a Church, that deprives them of their best Defence, the protection of God, and exposes them to the worst of dangers; and these Sins are a profane contempt or neglect of things Sacred.

Of which we need seek no further for an Evidence than the times we are upon, viz. of the Judges; insomuch, that during the 450 years of that Administration, there were 111 of those years, years of Oppression; the reason of which is all along ascribed to their Apostacy from the True Religion; and that therefore God *strengthened* their Adversaries, and *deliver'd* and *sold* them into their hands. A. 13.
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Judg. 3.
8. 12.
4. 1. 6. 1.
10. 6.

And if we descend lower, and consider the Example set before us in this Chapter, we have one Instance beyond all exception, in the Family of *Eli*; whose Sons *Hophni* and *Phineas* were both slain in one day, the Ark taken, and thereupon *Shiloh*, which had been the place of its Residence for 340 years, (if not more) left desolate. Psal. 78.
60.

A Case

A Case so remarkable, that in as degenerate an Age, when they placed as much confidence in the Temple, as these did in the Ark, they are sent to this Monument of God's just Indignation for their confutation. *Jer. 7. 4, 12. Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.*

And this we find to be the usual method of Divine Providence throughout the Book of God : That whilst Religion was maintained, and the Hands of *Moses* held up, the *Jews* prevailed against the *Amalekites*, and prosper'd whithersoever they went : But if they fell, and Religion declined, that Contempt gave force and success to the Stratagems and Combinations of their Enemies. Then God will forsake his own *Tabernacle*, and deliver up his strength into the hands of their Enemies, that he may make them sensible, that his Justice and his Word are greater than the Ark, which was to be worshipped for his sake ; as *Josephus* expresseth it.

Psal. 78.
60.

De Bell.
l. 5. c. 12.

So that in fine, if we would make a just calculation of what is like to be the fate of a People, whether to the better or the worse, to the success or disappointment, the safety or ruin of a Nation, we need not have recourse to the Stars, and the vain Pretences of a Delusive Art : But we may

go no farther than to the state of it as to Religion and Vertue on the one hand, or Vice and Impiety on the other; and then without the Spirit of Prophecy we may come to a point, and foretel how it shall be with them in the latter end.

And this is a Subject fit for the serious Consideration of a People, and especially at such a time as this, when we are assembled together before Almighty God, to implore his Blessing upon the Publick Counsels and Proceedings, upon which the good of this Nation, and the Fate of the Western part of *Europe* more especially, doth depend. And this will lead us to the Second General, which is

II. To consider the Proposition in the Text, with relation to the Context; and to the matter of Fact it is subjoyned to.

We have a remarkable Instance of this before us in *Eli*, who was (as aforesaid) as well a Judge as a Priest, and established in both capacities; that by this conjunction of two of the highest Offices in himself, he might be in a capacity of recovering the pristine honour of Religion and the Nation; which for a long time had been in a very declining state, and by the untimely Fall of *Sampson*, *Eli's* immediate Predecessor (as may be conceived) little less than desperate, in human appearance. Be-

Eli being thus invested with the Supreme Power and Authority, had an opportunity for doing the greatest Good, for Reforming matters in Church and State, and settling them upon a sure and lasting Foundation. In which, how happily soever he succeeded for a time, and so as to have the former part of the Text verified in him, *Them that honour me, I will honour*; yet afterwards there followed so great disorders, through the evil Practices of his Sons, and his Indulgence to them, that drew upon him as severe a Train of Judgments, according to the threatening of the Prophet *Elkanah* (as the *Jews* say) as ever a Person or a Family felt and suffer'd; to the confirming the latter part of the Text in the highest sense of it, *Those that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed*, that is (according to the usual *Meiosis* in Scripture, and as we are taught by the Event) shall be most severely punished.

Rom.

15. 4.

1 Cor.

10. 6.

Now these things were our ensamples, and are written for our admonition: For the History of Scripture is a practical Comment upon Divine Providence; and what was in its design composed for the use of all future Ages, that Posterity might by the numerous Examples of all kinds as to good or evil, be encouraged as to the one, and cautioned against the other.

And

And to such as these is our Text more especially to be applied; to such a People, and such Persons, whom God by his signal Providence hath been propitious to above the common sort and case of Mankind.

Eli had much to answer for, because more might justly be expected from him by reason of the Advantages he was superior to many others in: That *Eli*, whom God had thus chosen to his Service, and had thus dignified beyond any other of his Successors; as was also the Nation he was of, beyond any People in the World.

And to what doth all this serve, but to teach Persons of Eminence for their Quality or Office, for their Interest, Power and Authority, what use they should make of it? That so they whom God hath honoured in advancing them to such a degree of Superiority, may not as the degenerate Sons of *Eli*, *make themselves vile and contemptible*: That when God has made them to be Stars in the Firmament of Heaven, to give light, and shed their benevolent influence upon the Earth, they should in the issue prove no other than Meteors, shewn to the World for a time, but all o'th' sudden expire without any benefit to Mankind.

Can we think that no more is expected from us, whom God hath endued with the light of Rea-

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son, and fitted for Service in the Station and Condition we are, than from the Horse and the Mule that have no understanding; and that we have answer'd the end of our Beings, if we spend our days in a torpid and unprofitable sloth, or in such things as the Bruits can do as well as we?

And can such Persons whom God hath blessed with Gifts and Talents above others, or rais'd by his Providence to a state of Eminence, think that there is no more required of them, in their publick Station, than if they drowzed away their time in some obscure Corner, alike unknown, and unprofitable to the World?

No surely; but as we ought often to reflect upon our selves, and to consider how we that are reasonable Creatures, and whom God hath made *vessels to honour*, may employ our Talents to the Glory of our Creator; suitable to the dignity of our Nature, and to high and nobler purposes than those Creatures that are made *vessels to dishonour*: So ought those, who out of the common mass of Mankind are exalted above others, to answer the dignity of their Station, and to consult how they may demean themselves worthy of that honour their Creator hath thought fit to place such a distinguishing Character upon.

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Our Saviour saith, *Who* whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more: Luke 12. 48. And especially may this be expected from those that are the Representatives of a People, and that are concerned in making those Laws for the promoting of Religion and the honour of God, by which they themselves, as well as the Community, are to be Governed. How doth it become such to establish the Authority of those Sanctions by their Example, and not to take that undue Liberty to themselves, which they, in the Laws they make, deny to others?

How doth it become them to be the support of Religion, to stand up in the defence of it, to revive its drooping Spirits, and to make that by their Authority as Sacred as the Holy Mount, under the Law, which no man should dare to break in upon and violate!

Here is a Cause not only worthy of their Appearance and their Zeal, but what also is at this time Necessary, when the very Foundation of Religion is Attempted, and that which all the World has so much wanted, and desired where it was not, I mean Revelation, is exposed, and that which we all venture our Salvation upon,

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the Christian Institution, the Sacrifice and the Mediation of our Blessed Saviour, is openly declared to be Derogatory to the Perfections of Almighty God; and Injurious to Men.

We are here a Christian Assembly met together in the Fear of God, and with a Hope in his Mercy through Jesus Christ; and it is an happy opportunity offer'd to us by the Supreme Authority of the Nation, for Imploring the Divine Blessing upon the Publick Councils and Affairs; by which we declare to the World, in Honour we bear to Almighty God, what Dependence we have upon him, and do professedly put our selves under his Protection: And how can this better be expressed by the Patriarchs and Prophets, than by taking his Religion into theirs, by bearing as great a regard to, and being as much concerned for the Honour and just Rights of it, as for their own?

If this be the Event of this Solemn Appearance, and shall be the Compass by which they principally steer in their Consultations and Proceedings; as they will thereby honour God, so too for their so doing will honour them, and make them a publick Blessing to the Nation; and the Nation as Jerusalem, a praise in the earth. *Isa. 60. 1. 7.*
Which God of his mercy grant for the sake of Jesus Christ our only Mediator. Amen.

